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Mr D Mooney
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Mooney

Ofsted survey inspection programme – modern languages

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and those of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 26 February 2008 with Madeleine Gerard AI to look at work in modern languages (ML).

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions, but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

Schools are expected to provide an entitlement for all pupils in Key Stage 2 to learn a modern language by 2010. As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on implementing languages entitlement.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work, observation of two lessons and brief examination of the school's extra-curricular provision for languages.

Context

French was taught to older pupils over many years by the former headteacher. From September 2006, however, a visiting specialist from a neighbouring language college has delivered French lessons. Last year she taught Years 4, 5 and 6, and in the current year, because of a reduction in outreach staffing, she teaches Years 5 and 6.

Achievement and standards

- Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, with some higher attaining pupils making good progress. Lower-attaining pupils are not always sufficiently well supported, making slower progress.
- Pupils listen and respond well, especially when they are able to take an active part in the lesson.
- Their speaking is confident and they have good pronunciation and intonation. They enjoy performing in front of the class and talk with enthusiasm of opportunities they have had to do this.
- Achievement in reading and writing is limited, but older pupils write accurately when given the opportunity. For example, Year 6 pupils recently wrote a poem in French.
- Their intercultural understanding is limited, although pupils are keen to talk about their experiences of the international world gained beyond school.
- Similarly, pupils are proud to talk about their home or heritage languages.
- Pupils understand the value of languages and are keen to continue with their learning into secondary school.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- Pupils are taught by a visiting secondary specialist. She has good subject knowledge and provides pupils with a clear and accurate model of spoken French. She is enthusiastic about the subject and is a lively presence in the classroom.
- Much of the lessons are teacher-led from the front of the class, with individual pupils answering questions. However, when pupils are offered opportunities to work in pairs or groups, or move around the room, they relish these activities and participate with great enthusiasm.
- Pupils benefit from the school's good information and communication technology (ICT) facilities. They particularly enjoy active involvement with the interactive whiteboard.
- Whilst lessons are planned to provide a range of different activities, clear learning objectives are not always established or shared with pupils. Planning for the mid- and long-term is lacking and so neither teacher nor pupils are clear about what is expected at the end of each sequence of work.
- Whole class activities are well planned, but there is insufficient differentiation to ensure that all pupils make good progress. Lower attaining pupils, in particular, require more support.
- Teaching assistants sometimes help the visiting teacher support pupils, but they need more information about intended outcomes in order to give optimum support. Currently their expertise and presence are not exploited to the full.

- Although pupils are given some oral feedback in the course of lessons, there is no systematic formal feedback on performance. As progress is not recorded, opportunities are missed to build on assessment for future planning. 'Can do' sheets are being considered to enable pupils to gauge their progress. There is currently no summative assessment and the school does not report to parents.
- The school is considering how to pass on information about Year 6 pupils' achievements to secondary schools, but this is at a very early stage of development.

Quality of curriculum

- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 currently receive 40 minutes' discrete French teaching a week. This is not yet systematically reinforced by class teachers who do not generally sit in on French lessons.
- The scheme of work being used is adapted by the teacher for the school, but insufficient emphasis has been placed on identifying learning objectives for each term and year. The *Framework for Key Stage 2* does not yet underpin learning.
- Good efforts have been made to integrate work in French with some aspects of the school curriculum, for example: festivals and religious celebrations, but this is not yet systematic. Opportunities are lost to link different areas of pupils' work to their language learning.
- Pupils in the school speak a range of languages and the school is aware that it could do more to exploit their languages and cultures to improve the learning of all.
- Latin is taught to older pupils and they enjoy this provision. A trip to Holland offers Year 6 pupils an international experience, and it is planned to link this further to languages work in the future.
- Younger pupils have the opportunity to attend a privately funded extra-curricular French club on the premises. The school recognises that closer monitoring is needed in order to ensure that pupils make good progress and are enjoying their early language-learning.

Leadership and management of ML

- Language provision is currently co-ordinated by you. The school has endeavoured to keep French on the timetable during a period of staffing and management changes, and senior leaders have a good knowledge of current strengths and weaknesses in provision.
- There is a clear rationale for the teaching of French in the school and recent auditing of staff expertise indicates that this is an appropriate choice as the main foreign language.
- Liaison on languages with one of the three main secondary destination schools is good and the school is well placed to establish further contact with the two others.
- The school has begun recently to work on a languages policy and an action plan for future development. Governors are to be involved.

- There is good recognition of the importance of staff commitment to training as the initiative develops.

Implementing languages entitlement

- Progress towards implementing languages entitlement is satisfactory.

Inclusion

- Provision on the taught curriculum for all pupils in Years 5 and 6 to learn French reflects an inclusive approach by the school. However, lessons are currently insufficiently differentiated, and so not all pupils are reaching their potential in the subject.
- Both boys and girls make equal progress, and participate equally well in lessons when they are given opportunities for independent work.
- One pupil with a serious physical disability spoke with great enthusiasm about languages. She is plurilingual and the school is enabling her to develop her talents well.
- The school knows that many of its pupils have a knowledge of other languages, either home or heritage languages and cultures, and is well-placed to involve parents and carers to develop these further.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- planning for sustainability, through establishing a subject coordinator and developing a progressive training programme for staff
- planning for progression through establishing a scheme of work based on *The Framework*, including the development of reading and writing skills, knowledge about language and intercultural knowledge and understanding
- developing formative and summative assessment
- building more fully on pupils' home and heritage languages.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop languages in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Anne Feltham
Her Majesty's Inspector